

Daily Devotions for the Season of Lent

from the Heart, Mind and Spirit of the 3rd COSCOM Soldier



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1 March 2006

Ash Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 130; Amos 5:6-15; Hebrews 12:1-14; Luke 18:9-14

DEVOTION

When I was in seminary, my parents moved to New Orleans and I was introduced to the concept of “Mardi Gras”. The Mardi Gras season begins with the Carnival Season on January 6, twelve days after Christmas (when the Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem). Carnival culminates on Mardi Gras, (which is a French term meaning “Fat Tuesday”) the day before Ash Wednesday.

While I’ve never visited New Orleans during Mardi Gras, I do remember watching a TV program about the days leading up to Fat Tuesday that left me shaking my head in disbelief. Persons interviewed said that on Fat Tuesday they try to do as much “sinful stuff” as they can get away with- all the while knowing that the next day they’d go to church and ask God’s forgiveness for their behavior while at the same time promising to give up those sins for the next forty days.

Self-denial may be some people’s approach to Lent, but I don’t believe it’s what Jesus had in mind when He spoke of taking up one’s cross and following Him (Matt. 16:24). His call for self- denial was a daily commitment to Him in all areas of life.

When Paul wrote to the Hebrews, he encouraged them (and us today) to “rid themselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2). As believers in Jesus, we need to follow Him faithfully every day. It’s never right to take time-out from our commitment to Him.

During this Lenten season, take the time to reflect on your actions, your faith, and your purpose in life. Make a conscious decision to shed old habits and attitudes that bind you and keep you from being the person God created you to be.

Prayer: Lord, I want to serve you in full surrender. You are the potter and I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will; while I am waiting yielded and still.

CH (MAJ) Jeff Bell, 40th CSG

2 March 2006
Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 37:1-18; Habakkuk 3:1-18 ; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17:1-8

DEVOTION

There are two types of people who are reading this devotional right now. There are those who are going through a difficult trial in their life, and those who are about too. Where can we go when it looks like the trials of this life are almost too much to bear? What can we cling to in the midst of such times?

I think of a man named Horatio Spafford. This man lost his fortune in the great Chicago fires, then he lost his children at sea when the ship they were traveling on sank. What was Mr. Spafford's response when he was told that they were sailing over the very spot where his children were lost? It was this, "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, it is well with my soul."

The fact is, sometimes there is no "why". In the midst of heartache and burden, in the midst of our unanswered questions and seeming lack of direction, we must believe with all of our heart that when all is stripped away from us but God, we still have God. He is a fountain of goodness, grace, mercy, truth, and love so much so that we are satisfied, full, and overflowing. God is good and His mercy endures forever. That is my conclusion to the whole matter. It must be.

When the storm clouds rise up, and the waves seem to be coming over the side of the boat, we know the Master of the sea and He has promised to keep us and never leave us. Never alone my friends, with Jesus our Savior we are never alone. The greatest hope we have every day is that when this journey is over we will see Him face to face. The Children of Israel said it this way, "even though we have no produce, no meat, no income, and no herds, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice because He is the God of my salvation".

SGT Christopher M. Rosevelt, 3rd COSCOM

3 March 2006
Friday

READINGS

Psalm 95; Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Philippians 4:1-9; John 17:9-19

DEVOTION

As we approach Easter, I have been reflecting on these passages and how they apply to my daily living. I have also given a lot of thought on how often I fall short in areas like “obedience” or “be anxious for nothing” or “rejoice always!” or “pray for others.”

I have some days when I seem to have 100 reasons why none of the above fit into my battle rhythm or my attitude. You might be able to relate: way behind on email, tired, frustrated, homesick, paperwork, briefings, CLP mission, serious incidents where Soldiers or Marines or civilians are injured or killed, and the list goes on. I also have some days when I cannot even pinpoint what my problem is or why my attitude is not one of rejoice, but it just is not. I may not know the exact causes, but more often than not it is because I have allowed myself to be consumed with earthly problems and I have taken my eyes off Jesus.

So, I am thankful that I have Jesus’ example to keep me from spiraling out of control. Through prayer, fellowship, reading the Bible and looking up for discernment, I find strength and encouragement. Nothing compares to Jesus’ personal example.

Most every morning, in the quiet stillness of my hooch, I take communion. I read from I Cor 11: 23-26, “...the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread and gave thanks...” These words have weighed heavy on my heart and made a lasting impression. If Jesus can give thanks on the same night He was betrayed (not just frustrated or tired), if Jesus can forgive those who placed Him on the cross (when He was perfect and without sin), if Jesus is able to demonstrate the discipline and obedience to follow through with Cavalry (when He had the miraculous power to do otherwise, remember He was resurrected and He LIVES!), then surely I can “be obedient, be anxious for nothing, rejoice always, and pray for the same for others!”

BG Rebecca S. Halstead, CG, 3rd COSCOM

4 March 2006
Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 43; Ezekiel 39:21-29, Philippians 4:10-20, John 17:20-26

DEVOTION

Many of you are familiar with the Cingular cell phone commercial where a gentleman goes to great lengths to gain reception on his cell phone. Every so often he would ask the other party, "Can you hear me now?" with no answer from the other party. This commercial brought to mind the scripture of Ezekiel 39:21-29. After reading this scripture, I would like to equate GOD to the gentleman who is trying to gain contact with the individual on the cell phone. You see, GOD is still the same as He has always been. He goes to great lengths to get our attention and the attention of the whole world.

Is the reason GOD is unable to gain contact with you due to your unwillingness to listen?

In many cases, GOD has to utilize a pitchfork to prod us or to gain our attention. GOD may use the pitchfork of loss, sickness or even pain. He may talk to us through difficult circumstances, job loss, and economic hardships. He may even subject us to the loss of our health. He may allow us physical, mental, or emotional pain to get our attention. If you are experiencing any of these things, listen carefully because GOD's voice is speaking through it all.

GOD may show us great kindness and mercy, which we believe may be undeserved. In spite of our waywardness, our deliberate acts of rebellion, our inattention to his word- read or spoken, our neglect to pray or sacrament, He will continue to call us to Him. Why? Not because we deserve it, but because He loves us unconditionally and in spite of our sinful ways. Like all good parents, GOD will continue to love and to nurture His child although the child may believe he no longer loves his Father, or that his Father loves him.

You see, GOD does not overlook our sins, nor will He abandon us when we sin. He will, however, walk with us through our journey to learn from our sin. He poured out his anger against sin through his son, Jesus. Do you believe that was not fair or that it is was not the way a Father should behave toward his only son? Those questions can be answered simply by saying that GOD's ways of doing things are not our ways. His methods are not our methods. His understanding is not our understanding. His love for us is simply beyond our comprehension.

GOD does whatever it takes to get our attention. What is GOD using to get your attention today? Are you listening?

If you do hear GOD's voice, do not harden your heart. Instead, turn to him, believe, and ask for His forgiveness and for His help. He will hear your cry, turn His face toward you, and give you peace.

LTC Lawrence Robinson, 3rd COSCOM G2

5 March 2006

Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 103; Daniel 9:3-10; Hebrews 2:10-18; John 12:44-50

DEVOTION

“Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” Psalm 103:1-2

One of the best ways to motivate and encourage others is to appreciate them. Words of thanks, reports of their “shining moments” of excellence, and remembering them in thought and word are powerful tools to give feedback to those who help us and serve with us.

Words of appreciation and thanks are all too rare in our culture, and far too precious to forget. How often have we felt offended that bosses and coworkers forgot “a simple thank-you,” leaving us empty and angry? Yet we forget others’ efforts daily, acting in ignorant haste, forgetting thanks and taking them for granted.

Another powerful tool for feedback is to praise others in public. Those we truly appreciate, we remember in speeches and reports. How would our fellow workers react to seeing their name in print, attached to a glowing positive report? Awards and honors communicate thanks in a powerful way.

Perhaps the strongest appreciation we can show for others is to think of them often, and talk about them often. Married people often fall victim to the trap of speaking always about work, or the children, never remembering to mention their spouse in their daily conversation. And how blessed is the person who remembers to pray for us, to talk to God on our behalf? They are our best resource in tough times!

Prayer: “Gracious, powerful and awesome God, Lord of heaven and earth, teach me to be gracious and thankful to all who serve with me today. Grant me strength to praise those who serve well, to bless those whose efforts improve my life, and to bring all these whom You love before you continually, for their blessing and for Your love. Amen.

CH (CPT) Rob Smith, 548th LTF

6 March 2006

Monday

READINGS

Psalm 41; Genesis 37:1-11; I Corinthians 1:1-19; Mark 1:1-13

DEVOTION

Recently, I found myself engaged in a friendly conversation with some senior (“real-old” like me) soldiers about the Army values dog tags and cards that are now issued to soldiers. The banter went something like, “Back in the day, we didn’t need these things. We just knew better,”.....

Although the conversation was just an uneventful run of the mill exchange like many others that we have as the days pass, the subject stuck in my mind. I thought to myself, as the senior people in our organizations, how often do we make an honest effort to champion these great values? All are of equal importance, none outweighs the other. When I received and read the biblical passages I was to use to as a guide to write this Lenten Devotional, the conversation again came back to me, and the value of “selfless service” jumped to the forefront.

The Holy Bible has many examples of people who lived by this value, but none exemplify selfless service better than Saint John, The Baptist. Mark 1:1-13 tells the story of St. John’s selfless service to both God and to the Messiah. I have read this section of the book of Mark many times, but only in the context as the story of Jesus’ Baptism, not John’s service to something greater than himself. By the time Jesus had come to Him to be baptized, John’s fame as a holy man of God was wide-spread. Mark 1:5 tells us, “All the land of Judea went out to him.” This indicates the sweeping impact of his ministry, as John was perhaps the leading religious figure outside of official and rabbinic Judaism of the time. Luke 1:36 tells us that Jesus and John were related through their mothers, and were perhaps acquainted with each other. John had been chosen by God before his birth to be the forerunner of the Messiah. In our modern terms, he had very important connections. John, in his own right, was a very important man, who could, if he wished, influence a great number of people.

We all know the story of Jesus’ temptation, but what of John’s? I thought to myself, there is no biblical reference to John ever being tempted, but, all of that fame, people from far and wide sought him out and all that delegated authority based on the word of the prophets. What would I have done in his place? Could I have resisted using this unique situation for personal gain or position to serve myself over the common good or the mission at hand?

What John did was to selflessly serve. He prophesied the coming of the Messiah, one greater than himself. He did his task as part of something greater. Mark 1:7 quotes John as saying, “I prepare the way for one immeasurably greater than I, whose sandal strap I am unworthy to stoop down and loose.” What an incredible act of humility and service.

No matter what rank or position we hold, placing self interest last and serving with total commitment acts as a beacon of conduct that serves to inspire those around us to do likewise, no matter how difficult a mission or task might become. Just as John’s work was crucial to Jesus’ ministry, the work that we do, no matter what that work might be, is part of and crucial to something much greater. In the competitive world we live in, it is sometimes very difficult to take self interest out of the picture and place self last.

As I close, I am looking at this little piece of plastic with the words “Selfless Service” printed on it and I realize that John, The Baptist and Forerunner, was our perfect example of a man who set the standard for this Army value, a very long time ago.

MAJ John Penree, 3rd COSCOM G6

7 March 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 47, Genesis 37:12-24, I Corinthians 1: 20-31 Mark 11:14-28

DEVOTION

From our early days of Sunday school lessons we remember the stories of Joseph. These stories serve such a great way to show how GOD works in mysterious ways. The favorite son of his father was sent on a mission that would save his people when they were about to die for lack of food. The family of Jacob had no other way to survive, and would have perished without hope.

Is that not also the same as GOD sending his favorite son, his only son, to save us? “For GOD so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” John 3:16. We understand that Joseph was put in that position to be sold as a slave in Egypt, to be a nobody in this world. In the same way Jesus was only a carpenter's son. Joseph's faithfulness in the Lord was shown to Potiphar, captain of the guard to Pharaoh. Joseph could have been just a slave in that country and never heard of again. But his faith in GOD proved to be his salvation. He was not merely a common slave to man, but a follower of our LORD. He could have remained angry about the treatment he had received from his brothers. But he held no evil thoughts for them.

Joseph forgave his brothers. Think how much more wonderful the fact that JESUS forgave those who crucified him. “Father forgive them ; for they know not what they do,” Luke 23:34. During this time of Lent we can reflect on how God's plan is always on time and the right plan. Maybe from the beginning it does not look that way, from being hated by your brothers or the world, but never by GOD.

We might not be able to save a nation, or as JESUS did, a world. But we can be hand-picked by our Savior like he did to brothers, like Simon and Andrew, or James and John. When asked, they straightway followed him. They didn't question where to go or how much is the pay. “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Mark 1:17

CW4 Richard L. Brooks, 19th SC

8 March 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 53; Genesis 37:25-36; I Corinthians 2:1-13; Mark 1:29-45

DEVOTION

Today's reading from the Gospel of Mark reveals Jesus as a healer. He teaches us that we are incapable of perfection, that we will forever need God's grace. Humans are susceptible to disease – illness of the body as well as illness of the Spirit. Lent is the season for renewal and preparation for the great sacrifice through which we are redeemed. One Catholic tradition of Lent is to forego some pleasure or shortcoming in Sin that distracts from the coming Easter sacrifice. As a child, the long 40 days of Lent meant no candy or one hour less of TV, nearly unbearable sacrifices.

This Lent, rather than give up something, try seeking Grace through observance, reflection, and a focused effort to grow closer to the Lord. My Lenten ritual is to fast and abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and each Friday of Lent. I will set aside time each of those days to meditate on a passage from the Bible. I will seek healing. Do not be discouraged by failure or be frustrated by a return to old habits. Remember that Jesus heals, reaches out to the faithful, and accomplishes what we can not do on our own: "The people were all so amazed...this man has authority to give orders to the evil spirits, and they obey him!" Surrender your weakness and have faith that Jesus will heal you.

MAJ Mark Evans, 27th Trans BN (MC)

9 March 2006

Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 46; Genesis 39:1-23; I Corinthians 2:14-3:15; Mark 2:1-12

DEVOTION

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:1-5 (NIV)

I know all of us at one time or another have felt like this paralyzed man. Struggling to see Jesus when there's no way to get through the crowd by ourselves. I can remember when I was younger and all the struggles I went through with having alcoholic parents. Trying to be a kid and a grown up all at the same time was not easy. Before I began my walk with Christ, God blessed me with Christian friends who helped lead me to him. Twenty-five years later God continues to bless me with Christian friends who guide and help me keep my faith.

Today there are people all around us who are discouraged and carrying heavy loads just waiting to be brought to Jesus. We as Christians cannot stand by and let them struggle or get lost in the crowd. We must team up and share our faith!

CPL Monica Olson 3rd COSCOM

10 March 2006
Friday

READINGS

Psalm 51; Genesis 40:1-23; 1Corinthians 3:16-23; Mark 2:13-22

DEVOTION

As a young girl, one of my favorite movies was The Wizard of Oz. There is a character in the movie with whom almost everyone can identify. My favorite is the Tin-Man – pleadingly singing “If I Only Had a Heart”. The Tin-Man wanted to be “kinda human”. He recognized this unique characteristic of human beings – the ability to care for one another; to share the hurts and the joys; to love!

When David pleaded with God to “create in me a clean heart, O God”, he wasn’t praying simply to have his old heart restored – he wanted it regenerated! The Hebrew word for “create” is bara, which means “to create something out of nothing”. When God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1, the same word bara is used – God dynamically created something beautiful out of nothing. With great assurance and confidence, David took his sin and his guilt and laid it all before the Lord. He desired that brand-new beginning of being re-created through the Lord’s mercy and love.

God called David “a man after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). [And many of us are familiar with today’s popular book by Elizabeth George, “Woman after God’s Own Heart”.] Even though like David, we all sin daily, I am convinced that our Lord loves for us to continually communicate our desire, like the Tin-Man, to create a clean heart in us. And for what purpose? So that we may be “kinda human” -- so that we may be restored to the joy of His salvation -- and then go out and share this joy with others. That is the true meaning of Lent for me, and the purpose of the cross: to make a way for us to know constant fellowship with our God and Lord, through new mercies and grace each morning, and to live in the bright and beautiful joy of his salvation.

Father, how blessed I am to have the chance to live each day with a brand-new heart...a pure heart...a supernaturally regenerated heart full of the breath of your Spirit. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and restore to me the joy of your salvation.

LTC Susan Bacon, 3rd COSCOM

11 March 2006

Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 139, Genesis 41:1-13, 1 Corinthians 4:1-7, Mark 2:23-3:6

DEVOTION

PSALM 139

The All-Knowing, Ever-Present God

At the church my family and I attended before moving to Germany, there was a favorite song of the children that the congregation often sang before the young people left for Children's Church. Its first verse went like this:

Our God is a great big God,
Our God is a great big God,
Our God is a great big God,
And He holds us in His hand.

When I read Psalm 139, I think about how fortunate we are to have a great big God, one who not only holds us in His hand but one who, as David wrote, has searched us and knows us, one who created us and knitted us in the womb. We have a God so big that He knows what we are going to say before we say it, a God who knows our strengths and our weaknesses, a God that has planned our lives before we were even born. Our God is so powerful and all-knowing that no matter where we are located, He is there for us. When we are on LSA Anaconda, He is with us. When we are in Germany, He is with us. When we are in the United States, He is with us. No matter where we are, no matter what time it is, He is with us. Truly He is the first and best 24/7 operation in this world. And not only is He with us, but because He is an ever-present God, He is also with our loved ones no matter where they are, Germany, the United States, anywhere in the world. If our God was not such a great big God, He couldn't do all the wonderful things He does for us in this world.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for being such a great big God. Thank You for Your wonderful works and for being there for us, no matter where we are located. I take comfort in knowing that You are always there for me.

LTC Lance J. Newbold, 3rd COSCOM

12 March 2006
Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 8; Genesis 41:14-45; Romans 6:3-14; John 5:19-24

DEVOTION

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth!

As the leaders in the Army plan and prepare for missions and exercises, it is their job to anticipate the needs of the Soldiers who will conduct the missions. The leaders have experience and training that informs their decisions about what supplies and equipment the Soldiers will need to conduct the missions, both professionally and personally. They are usually pretty good at providing the things needed. Sometimes budgets, mistakes, or oversights cause something to be left out. The intention is that the Soldier has everything needed to perform the duty assigned to the Soldier.

Just as the Army tries to anticipate the needs of Soldiers called on to perform a mission, God knows everything we need in our life in order to honor Him and to perform the duties He calls us to do. He wants us to be successful in life, to be obedient to Him, and to worship Him. He has full knowledge of everything about us. He knows because He created us. He knows because Jesus Christ experienced all the trials and tribulations of humanity. He does not have to guess at what we need or how to best supply it for us. He never misses anything that we need. Many times He provides what we need before we know we are going to need it. Just like God provided for Israel during the drought through Joseph in Egypt, He provides for us through circumstances far beyond our imagination.

God's name is excellent because of who he is as well as what he has done and what he is going to do.

Prayer: Lord, help us to recognize that you are our provider. You provide for us at a time when we do not yet know that we even need what you are providing. You call us to service and provide the gifts we need to accomplish the task. Like for Joseph, you provided him the answer that also provided for Joseph's family, long before they even knew they needed it. Help us to always trust your provision. Thank you for providing for our eternal life through Jesus Christ, even while we were yet sinners.

CH (CPT) Terry E. Romine, 2-44 ADA

13 March 2006
Monday

READINGS

Psalm 56; Genesis 41:46-57; I Corinthians 4:8-21; Mark 3: 7-19

DEVOTION

Despair in combat can kill as surely as an IED. In a blink of any eye, despair can “kill” an organization’s focus. As a logistician, focus is a combat multiplier and our warriors deserve nothing less than our complete focus.

I must admit, I fell into Satan’s trap of despair when I was told that I would have to return to Iraq for a second tour. How did this fit into MY plans? I was angry at God and I was scared because of doubt. If I returned to Iraq it only increased my chances that I could be wounded or killed.

Psalm 56 is one of my favorite chapters in the bible because David is able to describe human emotions in probably a more succinct manner than any author in the history of literature. As soldiers, it is OK to be scared, but it is not OK to let despair or doubt creep into your conscience like a thief and steal your focus; your hope. Psalm 56: 3-4 says it best, “When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” What these verses tell me is that as sure as my IBA, E-SAPI, and Ballistic Helmet; if I wear the armor of God, “What can mortal man do to me?” This should shine the light of Hope on the darkness of despair and doubt; sharpening your focus on the prize.

During your study, this Psalm begs to question does being afraid lead you to trust God more, or less? Conversely, does not trusting God lead you to be more afraid? Less? Why? How can you choose faith when you are afraid. Which gets more notice from God: Your tears? Sins? Praises? Petitions? Why? If not God, in front of whom can you cry openly? If God is with us, why do we fear human threats so much? As soldiers why does this lead to loss of focus? Can head knowledge of God alleviate fears, which are emotional? How do you overcome fear? Some things to ponder when you go to U3 with the armor of God. May God Bless you and protect you “Even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”

LTC Matt “Mad Dog” Ferguson, 3rd COSCOM

14 March 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 61; Genesis 42:1-17; I Corinthians 5:1-8; Mark 3:19-35

DEVOTION

I joined the military in March, 1989. I attended Basic Training at Fort Dix, NJ, and AIT at Fort Monmouth, NJ. My first duty station was Fort Rucker AL. My first assignment was to the 46th Combat Engineers. During that assignment we had two deployments to remote areas and two Humanitarian deployments within the US. Being a young man from Savannah, Georgia, this was very new and exciting to me. It was great to see different places, meet new people, and try to help with all their problems while trying to be an asset, not a problem, to my chaplain. With all of this going through my mind, my chaplain (CH Williamson) really helped me through this time. Even though there were many differences between us, every Monday morning, without fail, we would have a devotion together. It was just he and I, and he prayed for me, my family, and the command, but never himself. That's what I remember when I think of Psalm 61.

As for the rest of today's readings, they seem to be referring to family, groups, organizations, and the way we treat one another. It is not only about treating others with proper respect, but also about holding each other accountable for our actions. We all should take a look at what we proclaim to be and to stand for, and consider not only what message we are sending out but most importantly what God knows is in our hearts.

MSG Elbert Jackson, 3rd COSCOM UMT

15 March 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 119:73-96; Genesis 42:18-28; 1 Corinthians 5:6-6:8; Mark 4:1-20

DEVOTION

Ever wonder – “How did I get here?” I did when I spent a year in Sinai, Egypt from 2000 – 2001 as part of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), the international peace keeping force. North Camp where I stayed was called, “El Gorah” translated, “The Hole.” It was totally isolated, only surrounded by desert for miles around. It was not quite the same as being here on LSAA, but it was very close to it – going off camp posed many potential dangers on the roads and travel to Israel ceased after hostilities began in the region. Every day I pondered over the reason I was there with no preparation - but are we ever really prepared to be where God places us?

Finding myself in the midst of biblical history, I took advantage of my surroundings. A group of us traveled seven hours to South Camp, Sharm el Shiekh, to partake in the Easter morning Sunrise Service on the beach of the Red Sea. It was such a beautiful sight to see the sun rise over the waters that morning. Chaplain Spencer (Catholic Priest) delivered the message and baptized some in the sea and others previously baptized were sprinkled. I remember after service on our way home, I felt a change in me – I had an upwelling urge to cry. And I did cry, uncontrollably for almost the entire trip back. I cried deep within my soul and I could not stop the tears from streaming from my eyes nor could I understand why I was crying. Why did I cry - perhaps it was because two weeks later my sister was to die of cancer – I believe I cried for her not knowing her death was imminent - given three months to live yet she died before I could make it home within three days. Maybe I cried for myself too, just trying to be in tune with my own spirituality. I knew I cried for the sound of my three year old baby’s voice knowing every time I called he wanted to know when was mommy coming home because he needed me. I even cried for my Soldiers and the leadership there and hoped that everyday would be fruitful.

I felt so spiritually challenged that year and could not understand my spiritual woes until one day I was speaking to the Chaplain and he simply said, “We all have a cross to bear in life – your cross is the cross to care for others. And sometimes when we find we hurt the most, it is when we are trying to care for those we love.”

The Lord touches us all in different ways and sometimes He removes us from our “comfort zones” and places us in the “desert of life.” And like Joseph in the book of Genesis when he was taken from his home and sold by his brothers and found himself in Egypt as a servant, he was confronted with situations beyond his control, but despite his situation, he strived to care for others and was favored by God. He continued to have love for others including his brothers. Genesis 42:24 says, “....and he turned himself away from them and wept.”

As servants of God, at home or in distant lands, God desires to give us peace and joy in our hearts no matter where we are physically or spiritually. He lets us know that even through the difficult times – He truly loves each and everyone of us .

Prayer: Lord I know there is a cross I must bear as I follow after Jesus. Continue to give me a heart that cares about your people, my brothers and sisters. Even in my desert experience, Oh Lord, strengthen me to do your will and to love like Jesus loved.

LTC Robin M. Smith, 3rd COSCOM G4

16 March 2006

Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 70; Genesis 42:29-38; I Corinthians 6:12-30; Mark 4:21-34

DEVOTION

“And He said unto them, is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?” Mark 4:21

What happens when a burning candle is placed under a bushel or a bed? Well, for one, the light is dimmed or possibly not visible at all. Second, when placed in a confined space the flame will begin to weaken, due to its inability to sustain combustion without a sufficient supply of oxygen. The end result is that the flame is useless for its intended purpose.

Jesus used an illustration that we could understand in order to drive home a very important principle. Just as He is light, we as His children are to display His light. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” The last phrase in this verse “...walk as children of light” is imperative, meaning it is a command from our Lord, not a mere suggestion. Jesus has revealed His light and He expects us to allow His light to shine in us and through us so that others might be drawn to Him. “For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

So often Christians knowingly, and sometimes unknowingly, allow many things such as indifference toward the Word of God, disobedience, or even intimidation to dim our light and hinder our effectiveness for Christ. Perhaps the first two examples are more noted than the third, however timidity is a very damaging thing to the spiritual life of a Christian and to one's own testimony as well. The Bible tells us in John 12:42-43 that many of the chief rulers of the Pharisees believed in Him, but they did not confess Him because of their fear of being put out of the synagogue, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” vs.43

Friend, whose praise are you seeking? Do you have a fear similar to that of the Pharisees when it comes to confessing Christ? Does your Christianity and spirituality vary according to what company you're in? Jesus said in Mt.10:32 “Therefore whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My father which is in Heaven.” God seeks to Glorify Himself through His children. In Mt 5:16 the Bible says “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” Who is glorified by your actions, reactions, speech, character, etc.?

If you have placed your light under one of the many damaging bushels that we confront, I bring you good news. Our God is a faithful God and “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Confess your condition to Him and make a whole hearted commitment to Him today, to ever live your life to shine forth His light. But remember this, His light must be present in order for it to shine. Rom.10:9-10;13

SPC Christopher Robbins, 3rd COSCOM UMT

17 March 2006
Friday

READINGS

Psalms 69; Genesis 43:1-15 ; 1st Corinthians 7:1-9; Mark 4:35-41

DEVOTION

Do you ever feel busy, buried, and behind? Do you feel like you are like the rat on a wheel – running 100 miles per hour but just don't seem to be getting anywhere?

If you said yes, then you aren't alone. One of the greatest leaders in the Bible felt a lot like you. In the first four verses of Psalms 69, David cries out to God saying, "I'm sinking in the miry depths, where there is no foothold... the flood waters engulf me. I am worn out calling for help..." Being a Soldier isn't easy. The daily battle rhythm is constantly interrupted by minor and major problems that set us behind in our work. We make decisions about people's lives that may put them in harms way, and there is stress. Our work, our family situations, our peers, leaders, and Soldiers can put us on edge. We may be easily frustrated, and internally may even panic a little. Sometimes the more we try and control our situation, the more out of control we feel. Where is God during these times?

In Mark 4:35-41, we find Jesus and the disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee. A furious squall rises and the disciples panic. The more they try and control the boat the worse it gets and where is Jesus? Sleeping. When the disciples wake him, he rebukes the winds and all is calm again. Amazing! When all seemed lost, Jesus was there fully in control.

Where is God when we feel out of control? He's right there, waiting for us to give up control of our problems to Him. It's that simple. To gain control of our lives so that we aren't busy, buried and behind; we give it up to Jesus. Our lives will never be perfect, we'll never have full control of every situation, but we can live in the greater peace and love of God when we have faith and let him work His will in our lives.

Prayer: Father God, I give up my attempts to control the uncontrollable. I know that You are in full control of my life. Grant me peace in Your plan for me. Thank you for lifting me up out of the dark waters and I will praise You to the end of my days.

MAJ Gary Spearow, 19th SC

18 March 2006
Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 23; Genesis 43:16-34; 1 Corinthians 7:10-24; Mark 5:1-20

DEVOTION

As I look back on my life, I see many unhappy moments. My mom made some mistakes while raising three children. My sister died when I was 20 years old. In college, I had to work, which took away from having fun. I was living a life that if things were not perfect, then I wasn't happy. As you can quite imagine, I was unhappy most of the time. I was allowing situations, some petty, some not so petty, to dictate my happiness. I was discontent.

What I realize now is that you cannot control situations; however, you can control your response to them. In each case above and countless others I was unhappy because I had failed to be content. With my mother, I failed to appreciate the many good things she did. With my sister's death, I failed to thank God that I was blessed to have a sister for 18 years. With the college job, I failed to be grateful that it contributed to my education and kept me out of trouble. No situation I have ever experienced lacked something positive. What was lacking was my attitude.

In Psalm 23, David tells us to be content and gives reasons to do so. Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we can be content because the Lord is with us and provides us comfort. We can be content in the presence of our enemies because the Lord prepares a banquet before us.

We can find a good example of hardship and contentment in Genesis 37-50 which tells the story of Joseph. Joseph dreamed that one day his brothers would bow down to him. When he told this dream to them, they were angered and sold Joseph into slavery. He endured many hardships in Egypt, to include being unjustly imprisoned. Through this, Joseph remained faithful to God and content with his situation. Eventually, his dream came to fruition.

We too should be content with where we are in God's plan. There are many hardships here in Iraq, to include increased threats to our lives and being away from our families. During this Lenten season, take time to reflect on why God has placed you here and seek to serve him to the fullest. Be content with your current situation and know that it is all part of God's plan for you—choose to accept the goodness and love that follow you wherever you are and dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Prayer: Lord, teach us to be content. Help us to clearly see the goodness and love you provide us in every situation. Give us the strength and endurance we need to live our lives for you and finish the race you have set before us.

LTC Keith Carroll, 3rd COSCOM

19 March 2006

Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 93; Genesis 44:1-17; Romans 8:1-10; John 5:25-29

DEVOTION

I realize now that a life without God and a life in sin is a life of eternal death. We all have decisions to make in this life and the most critical decision for me was when I decided to listen and respond to the Word of God for salvation.

John 5:25 (NRSV) says that “Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” The passage goes on to say in verses 28 and 29 that there is a judgment day coming. Those who are in their graves who have done good, or I say the will of God, will be resurrected to eternal life, and those who have done evil, or not the will of God, will be resurrected to condemnation. The decisions we make reflect if we are in or outside the will of God. The decisions we make reflect if we are doing good or doing evil. The decisions we make determine if we will have eternal life or eternal condemnation.

Romans 8:1-10 says that “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” This implies that anyone outside of Christ Jesus is in condemnation. The scripture additionally says that there are those who walk according to the Spirit and those that walk according to the Flesh. If our minds are set on things of the flesh, then there is death, but if our mind is set on things of the Spirit, then we have life. The next decision we make may determine where we spend eternity. Choose Life.

There are at five times in my life where situations tried to have me curse God and be separated from him in my relationship and in eternity:

The first time was on December 12, 1993 when my wife and I lost our first baby to a miscarriage. It was devastating, but we decided to hold on to the strongest thing in our lives . . . Our faith in God. We lost our second baby on July 12, 1994, our third and fourth babies on June 15 & 16, 1995, and our fifth child on April 29, 1996, all reconciled to God through miscarriages. Again, the only thing that sustained us was our relationship with God through Christ Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. We did not ask the question “Why?,” but “Why us?” On August 12, 1998 our sixth child was born 2 pounds, 4 ounces, 14 ½ inches long and I named him Christian Xavier McClendon McGhee. I know that this is a big name for a small baby, but we wanted to speak to his purpose in life . . . Christian Xavier McClendon McGhee (Christ is the Savior for Rev. Michelle McClendon and Rev. Dr. K. Llewellyn McGhee). Our son is now 8 years old and the tallest child in his class. I know now “why us?”

PRAYER: Lord, help your people seek and find a true relationship with you. Lord, help your people to know that you, as our God, are bigger than our petty arguments of race, culture, religion, denomination, social status, and positional and rank status. Lord, help us to choose you over every circumstance and situation in our lives. Jesus . . . It is in your name that I pray. AMEN.

CH (MAJ) K. Llewellyn “Chappy” McGhee,
LSA Anaconda Installation Chaplain

20 March 2006
Monday

READINGS

Psalm 77; Genesis 44:18-34; I Corinthians 7:25-31; Mark 5:21-43

DEVOTION

St. Mark 5:21-43 talks about how a ruler of a synagogue begged Jesus to come to his house to place His hand on the man's 12 year old daughter as she lay dying. In fact, while Jesus was on His way to the house, a messenger from the synagogue had announced that the little girl had died and that there was no reason for Jesus to be troubled any longer. Jesus went on to the house anyway and when He arrived told those gathered around the girl not to weep because the damsel was merely sleeping. He then took her hand and told her to rise, which she did.

This story has a special meaning for me. Two weeks before deploying to Iraq, I received alarming news that my father's heart surgery resulted in unstoppable internal bleeding and the doctors only gave him several hours to live. I rushed home to Florida on emergency leave in the hopes of seeing him alive one more time but when I arrived he was too sedated to recognize my presence. However, when I took his hand and spoke to him, my father's eyes turned in my direction, so maybe he did realize that I was by his side. Analogous to the damsel in St. Mark chapter 5, dad was also merely sleeping, and my faith tells me to believe that Jesus also took my father's hand that morning and told him to arise. And arose he did, although, unlike the little girl, rather than rise among us, the living, my father arose into God's heavenly kingdom where he now watches over me and the rest of our family.

LTC Albert 'Al' Zakaib, 3rd COSCOM G5

21 March 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 78: 1-39; Genesis 45:1-15; I Corinthians 7:32-40; Mark 6:1-13

DEVOTION

When I volunteered to participate in the Lenten Devotional, I thought to myself, “Karen, what have you gotten yourself into”? Me; write a devotional. That would be such a BIG task; almost impossible because I’m not a chaplain or a preacher; I don’t read my Bible like I should; and this would require more thought on my behalf to humble myself and really tap into my spiritual being. It was almost scary! As I thought of all the reasons why I couldn’t prepare a devotional, I concluded that the task was too impossible! Impossible only from the standpoint that I was too wrapped up and too concerned about what people would think about me. Would my thoughts in this devotional be good enough? Then a fear from my past came to mind; was I reverting back to an addiction that I have carried with me for most of my life? This fear of consuming myself with concern had once again reentered my mind. I started to think my mind was playing tricks on me and I needed to somehow rid myself of this addiction once and for all. So where would I begin?

I began by taking that stroll down memory lane to finally confront this concern that had consumed my mind for most of my life. You see growing up, I always concerned myself with what people thought of me. Would they think I was good enough? Would they like me? Would they accept me? Would I be a member of the so called “in crowd? Those were some of the questions that I concerned myself with on a regular basis. I was so consumed with this concern that it clouded my vision. Never once did my concerns lead me to the Lord to free my mind of these unnecessary views that I had during this time. I never knew that if I would just stop, shut-up and be still, that the Lord would free my mind of any concerns that were consuming me. One thing I have learned during my 41-year journey through life is that when you are spiritually right, there is no concern about what people say or think of you. The only concern you have is what does the Lord say and think about you! I Corinthians 7:32-40, verse 32 reads “I would like you to be free from concern” and verse 40 reads, “In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is”. Although I have read this passage before, today was the first time I truly recognized that my mind has always been free from all concern and I am happier if I stay as I am with the help of the Lord. I know for certain that I am about consuming myself with conducting the Lord’s business. During this Lenten season, rejoice in knowing that happiness is not found in any concern you consume yourself with rather it is the giant steps of faith you take in your daily walk with the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, free our minds so we may continue to grow spiritually. Help us to recognize and appreciate the gifts we already possess; help us know that there is nothing impossible when we consume ourselves with the business of doing Your work.

LTC Karen Rosser, 3rd COSCOM G1

22 March 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 119:97-120; Genesis 45:16-28; I Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 6:13-29

DEVOTION

Lent is not about self-denial and adding another burden or responsibility, but rather, an opportunity to enrich your life by choosing to enhance your relationship with God. Each day of the Lenten season should bring us closer in our walk with Christ.

The verses for today's devotional have a common theme, that of obeying God's laws. In Genesis, the story is told about Joseph's brothers selling him into Egypt. It would be so easy to walk away from those same brothers and go on with his own life, but Joseph chose to work hard, obey God's laws, and was promoted into the position of a ruler of Egypt. The opportunity arose for Joseph to help his brothers later in life and he took advantage of it. In following God's laws, Joseph was able to save his family and father from famine. We can be assured that by following God's laws, God will give to us what He has promised us.

The book of Mark describes how Herod was not able to keep God's laws. He made a promise to deliver anything his niece wanted. He respected John the Baptist's righteousness but because of his offer, he had John executed. Herod knew he was disobeying God's law but felt torn by honoring his word. Be careful in what you promise to others that you do not compromise your beliefs.

According to I Corinthians, we need to be careful that we do not lead our brothers astray. It is up to us to set an example for others to follow. If we exercise freedoms that cause our brothers to fall, we have sinned against our brothers and therefore sinned against Christ.

During this Lenten season, take the time to reflect on God's laws and design a personal plan to follow God's laws. Psalm 119 says that by following the Lord's commands, we gain understanding, insight and wisdom.

COL Martin Christensen, 3rd COSCOM Surgeon Section
MAJ Cindy Christensen, 3rd COSCOM Surgeon Section

23 March 2006
Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 42; Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34; I Corinthians 9:1-15; Mark 6:30-46

DEVOTION

During OIF 04-06 there have been some tough days, and the toughest have involved visiting seriously wounded Marines in the AF Theater Hospital. One visit, especially, sticks in my mind. Sergeant Daniel Gilyeat, a Marine Reservist, had one leg amputated below the knee, but he didn't let that stop him. He told the nurses: "I have a Marine Corps Ball to dance at in November." His attitude, in the face of adversity, was incredible. It reminds me of the poem on special plaque given to me before I shipped out to Desert Storm on New Year's Eve in 1990.

Footprints in the Sand

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed
he was walking along the beach with the LORD.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.
For each scene he noticed two sets of
footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him,
he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of
his life there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it:

"LORD, you said that once I decided to follow
you, you'd walk with me all the way.
But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life,
there is only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The LORD replied: "My son, my precious child,
I love you and I would never leave you.
During your times of trial and suffering,
when you see only one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you."

by Mary Stevenson

Lt.Col. Ron Guillam, II MEF LNO to 3rd COSCOM

24 March 2006
Friday

READINGS

Psalm 91; Genesis 47:1-26; I Corinthians 9:16-27; Mark 6:47-56

DEVOTION

“The Secret of being In the Secret Place”

In order for one to become what God has predestined them to be in life it takes a combination of things. It will require that you become a person of purpose, passion, and praise. In order to become a person of purpose, you must first have a desire to know what your purpose is. I did not say you have to know it right away. In order to show the desire for our purpose, we must go to the One who created us. It is our longing to get closer to God that will unlock our purpose.

As you read this, you are probably saying “get close to God, he is in heaven, I am here”. (smile) The way to get closer to God is to surround yourself with the things of God. I am not just talking about going to church, because you can go to church and still not be saved. What I am referring to is allowing the things of God to take up residence in my mind. Once the will of God is made known to you and me, we will get revelation from the spirit of God. We cannot expect the Lord to speak to us about “things” that we desire unless we get things in our life straight with Him.

Psalm 91 speaks of the blessing that we can have in God, but they don’t just happen. You have to “dwell in the secret place”, not just visit it every now and then. How do I dwell in the secret place when I have so much going on in my life? I dwell in ‘the secret place’ by allowing His words to dwell in my heart.

WO1 Anthony Hampton, 181st Trans BN

25 March 2006
Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 90; Genesis 47:27 – 48:7; I Corinthians 10:1-13; Mark 7:1-23

DEVOTION

Psalm 90

As we age in life, many fail to maintain the basics and often forget how important things and people really are. There was once a young lady that departed the family at the young age of eighteen to join the Military and serve her Country. Serving her Country was a great act and eventually the Military became family as visits home were few and brief when she did decide to go. Not only did she stop going home to visit family but her life with Jesus also changed, the church attendance dwindled from every Sunday to once a month to every now and then. Everything changed in the life of this young lady. Before she realized what had happened, her twenty years of Military Service was completed and she found herself feeling and believing she was truly alone.

Perhaps you are like the young soldier I write about. We often change our ways for the worse and at times those same ways are destructive, angered, and full of hatred. As children of God, all you have to do is ask and it shall be given if you only believe.

God is the same as He was yesterday and will be the same tomorrow. Instead of spending our days forgetting the so called little things in life, we must realize the little things, like the love for God, family, and friends, are the beauty of life. Know that those twenty-plus years of forgetting are in the past and letting God work within your life is only a Prayer away.

The beauty to this lesson is we are never alone. God is always with us. HE knows our sins and still forgives and remembers no more. Today, ask God to renew your heart and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

Lorese Dudley, 3rd COSCOM Safety

26 March 2006

Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 19; Genesis 48:8-22; Romans 8:11-25; John 6:27-40

DEVOTION

Have you ever woke up and asked yourself, “I wonder what this day holds for me?” I am sure it is the desire of many, if not all, to gaze into the future and to be able to see how each day unfolds before it ever begins. The popularity of horoscopes is proof of the desire to avoid the pitfalls of life; to find happiness and peace. They peer into the future by way of the stars, to know exactly what to do and not do.

But the challenge of the future is not the events we go through but our relationship with our Heavenly Father. It is not the stars that determine our future but the God who holds the future. The real choice comes when our commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is challenged.

In an effort to keep our holy relationship strong with God we need to pray as the Psalmist did in Psalm 19:12b-13: “Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.” Our future is built on what goes on inside our hearts and in our minds. This determines the choices we make. To be right with God is to make right decisions regardless of the events of the day. “May the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).

Determine to renew your commitment, search your soul and make a difference for God’s sake, for your sake. So when your commitment to Christ is challenged you have already decided to obey Him. May your happiness and peace be real in knowing you are right, right with the Lord.

CH (CPT) Raymond Folsom, 27th Trans BN (MC)

27 March 2006
Monday

READINGS

Psalm 89:1-18; Genesis 49:1-28; I Corinthians 10:14-11:1; Mark 7:24-37

DEVOTION

My father was far different than Jacob. He was many things, but perfect he was not. He loved my brothers and me and did bless us all in a different ways. As a young man I learned something about my father, which blessed me with understanding that allowed me to love and respect not only him, but others who have entered my life, flaws and all!

I had grown up hearing all the great exploits and adventures my dad had experienced in his life. Most of these from World War II. As I aged, so did the stories and so my belief that any of them could have occurred, (at age 15, I knew everything). Most prevalent and seemingly unbelievable of his stories were the ones surrounding his time as a body guard for General Eisenhower. When such stories were repeated again and again (to what seemed like any one who would listen,) I would shrink away, disavowing any recognition that I even knew him!

One day, during our travels, we ended up just outside of Abilene Kansas, the boyhood home and museum dedicated to General Eisenhower. The displays were laid out in chronological order. My father walked quickly, all but ignoring the childhood years through the years before WW II. However, all that changed when we entered this era. Something changed in my dad. I remember watching him closely and hoping he would not stop and talk to someone. He stopped and studied the displays closely, looking at picture after picture with an intensity I had never seen before. Then my greatest fear became reality. He made a scene, and what a scene it was!

My father spotted the General's Staff car he used during WWII; it had its doors open and roped off, my dad stepped over the rope, walked to the front passenger seat, and sat down; putting his foot on the running board. He reached in his pocket, took out a cigarette, and sat there! It took only seconds for the museum staff to run over to the car, ordering my dad to please get out.

As I stood there looking for a place to hide, my dad turned to the staff and simply said "do you know how many hours I sat here and how many cigarettes I smoked waiting for him?" Then he got up, stepped over the rope, and started to walk on. The museum staff walked after him asking him his name, asking him if he knew the General. My dad had an audience, and what an audience it was! It took only a few minutes for them to find duty rosters with his name on them, and a picture, and there was my dad looking more like me standing next to the car, holding a door as a gray coated General bent forward to enter the back seat. To this day I realize how blessed I am to be his son, from that day on my dad was a hero.

LTC James Hay, 3rd COSCOM

28 March 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 100; Genesis 49:29/50:14, 1 Cor 11:17-33, Mark 8:1-10

DEVOTION

As long as we live, life will present us many challenges that at times may seem to overwhelm us. This has truly been a year of such challenges for my family and me. Just like many other military families, we relocated from Fort Drum, New York to Wiesbaden Germany in April of 2005. After arriving in Wiesbaden we were informed that the unit would be deploying to Iraq in Six months.

The combination of re-locating and preparing to deploy again in less than six months could have caused my family to experience many emotions that could have left a negative impact on them. As I read the devotional readings I could apply what the psalmist David in Psalm 100 is saying to me and my family at this moment in our lives.

The psalmist David encourages us to Trust in the Lord, even when everything around us looks bad. He challenges us to make a joyful noise (Sing) to the Lord. This helps us to concentrate on the words we want to say to the Lord and takes our attention away from the things in life that cause us to worry. David is clear that God cares about us. We are the sheep of his pasture. We all know that sheep require constant attention, and that gives me a powerful sense of comfort, knowing that I have God's personal attention.

As life tries its best to drag you down, I encourage you to do what David so simply explained here: simply look to heaven and start singing, make up your own song, one that is personal to you and God. Sing away the sadness, sing away the pain, sing away the worry and doubt. Enter into his gates and bless his name, for the Lord is good and his mercy is everlasting.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in the wonderful name of Jesus, I come to you and ask that you bless me in everything I do. Lord I plead that the precious blood of Jesus covers me and my family, Amen

MSG Isaac N Horton 3rd COSCOM Engineer NCOIC

29 March 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 101; Genesis 50: 15-26; 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11; Mark 8:11-26

DEVOTION

Several years ago, when I was assigned to our National Training Center as an Observer/Controller, I was charged with showing rotating units “what right looks like.” In large part, I tried to accomplish this by sharing my warfighting experiences and knowledge of Army doctrine with leaders and Soldiers at all levels. However, my larger, and some would argue more important task, was to consistently present myself as the model Soldier/Warrior/Leader. As you would imagine, this was no easy task and to be brutally honest, forced me to turn away from many of the bad habits I had developed over the years, such as: using profanity, being too quick to anger, and being completely unforgiving when things went wrong.

As Christians, we share a burden similar to that of our O/Cs at the National Training Center. We must strive to live our lives so that others may see in us “what right looks like.” Each and every day, we are provided an awesome opportunity to witness to others by simply conducting ourselves in a Christ-like manner.

In Psalm 101, David encourages us to do this by showing great determination in behaving wisely at all times and turning away from sin. As Christians, by wearing our safety belt at night, showing up on time for church or communicating in an appropriate way with others, we can offer simple evidence of who we are, what we stand for, and what we believe in.

Over the years, I have learned how to behave wisely in church – staying awake most of the time – but the rest of the day can still be a challenge. During this Lenten season, I will be asking God to renew in me an intense desire to behave wisely all day long, so that I may set a Christian example of “what right looks like” for God and because of God. Please join me in praying that we could all be a better example for those with whom we serve.

LTC Donald G. Fryc, Commander, 2-44 ADA

30 March 2006
Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 73; Exodus 1:6-22; Corinthians 12:12-26; Mark 8:27-9:1

DEVOTION

Asaph, the author of the 73rd Psalm, is believed to have been one of the leaders of David's choir and a skilled musician. Despite his high position and great talent, he writes of his temptation to doubt his favor with God and envy the lives of others.

I know that I can easily relate to such doubt, and I have often asked God what part I am supposed to have in His work. How, as members of the body of Christ, do we have assurance about our location, position, vocation etc...?

This question is one that I ask each time I come to a crossroads in my life. When it came time for me to choose my college major, for example, I was forced to make a choice between music and engineering. With music, I already had some practical experience and could easily imagine what my life might look like in that kind of career. Engineering, on the other hand, was more of an unknown for me, and it took some faith on my part to choose that road. When I think back on that decision, I can only imagine how different my life would be had I chosen music as my major. It is an act of faith to allow God to lead us, through prayer and consideration, into our roles as eyes, hands and feet of the body of Christ. It also takes faith not to dwell upon or worry about our past decisions, good or bad. Like Paul, we should be "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead" (Philippians 3:13 NIV).

If we do not, we may find ourselves, like Asaph, envying others or worrying about the relative honor in our part of the body. Similar questions were asked about Jesus during His time here on earth. What was His purpose? Was He John the Baptist or Elijah? Did He rise from the dead? But Peter, in Mark 8:29, was confident that Jesus was the Christ, just as we should be confident in our part in God's work, if we are earnestly seeking it.

Prayer: Holy Father, thank you for the blessed assurance we have in Christ through His death and resurrection. We ask you to lead us as we pursue your will for our lives.

Graham Walker, 3rd COSCOM Safety

31 March 2006
Friday

READINGS

Psalm 107:1-32; Exod 2:1-22; 1 COR 12:27-13:3; Mark 9:2-13

DEVOTION

About a week ago I made a phone call home and from the sound of my wife's voice I could tell there was something that was troubling her. I asked her to let me know what was troubling her heavy heart. She said she didn't want anything to distract or worry me while I was deployed. I told her I have to know! She began to cry, telling me that our 23 year old daughter Melissa is in ICU at Long Beach Memorial Hospital. The doctor had misdiagnosed her illness and two days ago she was in critical condition. She told me to call her back in the morning and she will have more information for me. We hung up and I began to hurt so deeply inside. I sat down and prayed to God to help my daughter get thru this critical time. My S-1 came over to me when I was leaving and asked if everything was all right and I shared my story. We both prayed together and I went to my trailer for the longest night of my life, with no sleep and time alone with God.

When the morning came, I rushed back to the office to make my call home. My wife shared the news that Melissa was talking and asking my wife to stay the night with her in ICU. Melissa's I.V. machine went off and an ICU nurse came in quickly to see the problem. My wife called out to the nurse "Carol!" and Carol responded back "Julie!". Years ago Carol's husband and I served on a teen ministry together. She told Julie that she would spend the night watching and caring for her. (1COR12:27-28) My oldest daughter was exiting the hospital and ran into the Melissa's youth pastors from many years ago. He went to Melissa's bed and prayed for her.

My wife then shared that two weeks ago she left her school and blacked out and hit two parked cars and a telephone pole. This got her a ride to the hospital. The van was totaled and my wife is ok. We finished talking and I was to call back eight hours later for another update. I closed my office door from the world outside and began to look to God for answers. A feeling of fear and anxiety came upon while looking out my office window. Tears began to fall freely from my eyes as I called out to my God for his protective hands around my family. I knew God was at the helm of my ship and He would not leave me now (Heb 13-5). Melissa is home now and started back to college yesterday. Thanks be to God (Psalms107-1)

CSM Michael Baker, 40th CSG

1 April 2006
Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 108; Exodus 2:23-3:15; I Corinthians 13:1-13; Mark 9:14-29

DEVOTION

As I think about the Lent season, I am reminded of the love God showed us by sending Jesus. This time of year also allows me to reflect and regroup on my relationship with Christ. There is always something that I need to let go so I can give God more.

Just as Moses was tending a flock in the field God approached him by way of a burning bush (Ex. 2:23-3:15). As God was giving Moses his next steps, he realized that he needed to reflect and regroup for the future. God was giving Moses a chance to acknowledge his unbelief and trust I AM.

The same happened for the father who asked Jesus to heal his son, who had a mute spirit. Jesus showed this father that he had unbelief before his son could be healed. The father admitted his unbelief (reflect) and then trusted Jesus (regroup) to do the rest.

Yes, we all have something to cast out, for example fear, pride, discontentment, greed. Oh Lord, help our unbelief so that we may reflect on those things you have done and regroup to enjoy the blessings you have for us.

SGM James Riddick, 3rd COSCOM

2 April 2006
Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 145; Exodus 3:16-4:12; Romans 12:1-12; John 8:46-59

DEVOTION

Becoming a Living Sacrifice. Romans 12:1.

Throughout the Bible we read of sacrifices that were pleasing to God. God does indeed take great pleasure in a worthy sacrifice and in the one who presents it. In the Old Testament, God recorded in great detail the way His people were to present their sacrificial offerings. God called for his people to present the best they had in the form of their sacrifice. The sacrificial animal had to be without physical damage or imperfection. To offer God anything less than the best would be an offense to Him. When an offering was brought to God the offering changed possession; it no longer belonged to the one presenting the sacrifice but belonged solely to God and when this spotless sacrifice was offered it was declared to be “an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (Leviticus 1:13.)

God set forth the standards of a pleasing sacrifice in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we know that God met the standard for sacrifice when He offered His own Son as the spotless lamb on the altar of forgiveness. The only sacrifice worthy enough to atone for the sins of mankind came through the life, death and resurrection of God’s perfect Son.

God also asks us to lay down our lives on His altar, but when we do this we are called to be a living sacrifice belonging to God, not to ourselves. Just like in the Old Testament, our sacrifice is to be complete, and the best we have to offer without damage and blemish, spotless. To give less than a wholehearted sacrifice would be unacceptable to God.

Because of this, if you are a Christian, your life is no longer your own, but instead of requiring death, God asks you to live for Him as a walking breathing living sacrifice. This kind of life sacrifice is to be offered minute by minute and day by day in service to Him. This life sacrifice should be the first and best you have to offer, with your time or gifts, your talents and abilities. The way you live your life is your offering to Him. Make your life a pursuit of holiness so that it is an offering that is spotless and acceptable, “an aroma pleasing to the Lord”.

CH (CPT) Todd Williams, 181st Trans BN

3 April 2006
Monday

READINGS

Psalm 31; Exodus 4:10-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-19; Mark 9:30-41

DEVOTION

The Dictionary defines TRUST as a firm reliance on the ability, integrity or character of another. This dependence takes many forms and is certainly not a passive action. To fully trust another is to put everything we have or believe in within their hands and let go of the worry, fear, or doubt that so easily clouds our minds and hearts. For all who claim Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, we have someone, closer than a brother, in whom we place our total trust and confidence.

In Psalm 31, David seeks refuge in the great big arms of our God, entrusting his spirit to the Lord God of truth. God's loving response is to set our feet in a wide spacious place and to hide us in the safety of a secret place. God's call is for us to be of good courage, strengthened in the heart as we put our hope and trust in the Lord.

We see trust in God exhibited by Moses in Exodus 4:10-31, but only after he makes excuses to God over the Lord's command to speak out to the Egyptians. Even though, Moses was obstinate and had doubts, God rescued him from his fears and promised to provide all necessary strength for the tasks at hand if only Moses would trust Him fully.

The passage expressed in 1 Corinthians 14 teaches us not to question why God uses people in different ways to serve the kingdom. The fact that one possesses the gift of prophecy or can speak in tongues is not as important as trusting God to make the right choices in ordering our Spiritual Gifting. He can always be relied on to make the right choice, without question.

Finally, in Mark 9:30-41, Jesus points out that simple childlike trust is valued more in his eyes than position or status. Humble faith is what the Lord looks for in us, greatly blessing that reliance.

So, as we draw closer to celebrating the greatest achievement in the history of mankind, it is appropriate to ask "Who do you place your trust in now and forever?" Make the right choice today!

LTC Dave Lawson, CDC, 3rd COSCOM

4 April 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 121; Exodus 5:1-6:1; I Corinthians 14:20-40; Mark 9:42-50

DEVOTION

The season of Lent is one of rededicating your life to God, giving up sin, and of sacrifice. Being soldiers, sacrifice is a common occurrence for us, especially when it comes to field time and deployments away from our families. Sometimes, those deployments can be a time of reflection, to see and realize what things in our lives are truly important, and what we can discard.

In Mark, the Lord tells us again and again to discard that which causes us to sin, for it is better to be without that, than to burn in hell. It is better to enter Heaven without a hand, or an eye, or a foot, than to go to hell with both.

What He is trying to say is that no matter what we have in us, or about us, that causes us to sin, it is not worth being barred from Heaven on its behalf. He demands that we live sinless lives, and that we confess our sins to him so we may be purified by his love.

What sins are there in our lives? These may be in our thoughts, attitudes, words or in our deeds. Everything counts, everything affects us in some way in the end, no matter how small or great it is in the beginning. Sin is sin, no matter what shape or form it takes...God does not distinguish, there are no shades of grey, no "ifs, ands, or buts" about sin, merely black and white.

Of course, giving up sin is a hard thing for us to do, because some of it is so ingrained in our lives, we don't always realize its even there, or recognize it for what it really is... Depending on the sin, it may be a great sacrifice for us to endure, but the rewards in heaven far outweigh the pain and suffering we'll endure by not giving it up.

No matter what, though, God is there protecting and loving us, watching and waiting for us to give up our sins, so that he can embrace us, and bring us in through the gates of Heaven.

Eternal life with our Lord in heaven...Now, why would we NOT want to give up the sins in our lives.

SSG David N. Thomas II, 3rd COSCOM UMT

5 April 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 130; Exodus 7:8-24; II Corinthians 2:14-3:6; Mark 10:1-16

DEVOTION

Family values. It's a term that we hear so often these days, and it's a term that causes a lot of controversy among people these days. Single parents, divorced and remarried folks, and latchkey kids have made these issues very tricky ones to discuss in our day and age. We set up standards that separate us from one another on these kinds of issues. But there is a higher standard to consider than our own judgment.

Jesus was concerned with family values. In the Mark passage Jesus discusses marriage, divorce and children. He ends his thoughts on the subject by taking the little children in his arms and holding them close, rebuking his disciples for trying to keep them away. For Jesus, caring for the children and making a secure and safe place for them within his circle, within his influence, was very important. So important that he told his followers that anyone who did not approach God and His kingdom like a child would not enter in.

Right now we are separated from our families, and the children in our lives- whether they be our own children or nieces and nephews, children of our friends, or children in our churches and neighborhoods- are far away from us. But we can use this time to make ourselves better stewards of the children God brings into our lives. Let's use our time productively to identify the ways in which we have set up roadblocks or judged others as they go about trying to maintain their families. Let us commit ourselves to building a safe place for the children of all families, that they may grow to know well the kingdom that God has made for the whole human family that he calls his own. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Loving God, make us ever mindful of the blessings of family that you bestow on us. Give us new eyes to see you and your kingdom as a child might, that we may be ever filled with the wonder of it all. Bless us now this day for your name's sake. Amen.

CH (CPT) Craig Johnson, 485th CSB

6 April 2006
Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 133; Exodus 7:25-8:19; II Corinthians 3:7-18; Mark 10:17-31

DEVOTION

As we read the story of the rich young man it is easy for many of us to say that he was caught up in the law instead of the Spirit. He believed that by obeying the law he was doing what was right and that was all that is needed. We know from this story that Jesus challenged the young man to go beyond the legal requirements of the law and follow Jesus Christ with his whole heart. The young man was caught up in what he did for God instead of God.

The temptation that we might face today is similar to the rich young man. That is to put greater emphasis on the things we do for God instead of God. When we start thinking that going to worship, reading the Bible, Bible Study, devotional time, prayer, etc., will make us “Good Christians”, then we have fallen into the trap the rich young man did. None of these disciplines are bad, but when we do them to get them out of the way or out of duty we are missing the importance and reason we do them.

When we practice our spiritual disciplines it is important we always keep focus upon Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12: 2 says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith... We have spiritual disciplines so that we may grow in our relationship with him, not so we can check the block for the day. Lent is a time of reflection upon all that Jesus did for us so that we may have a relationship with him, so let us keep our focus and eyes on Jesus this season.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for all you have done and provided for us. We thank you for the chance to have a relationship with you because of the sacrifice of your Son Jesus Christ. We pray that we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and that you give us the strength to overcome the temptation to make devotion to you a routine instead of a loving desire.

CH (1LT) Darin Hendrey, 406th CSB

7 April 2006
Friday

READINGS

Psalm 143; Exodus 9:13-35; II Corinthians 4:1-12; Mark 10:32-45

DEVOTION

What is Lent? And what is the meaning of participating in Lent? Lent is a 40-day period of penitence and fasting from Ash Wednesday to Easter. It allows us to meditate, sacrifice and pray in order to become closer to God. As I read the verses for this day I reminisced about how God conquered Pharaoh and his army in order to free the Israelite people from bondage. But what was so intriguing was what God said in the book of Exodus 9:14 RSV, "For this time I will send all my plagues upon your heart, and upon your servants and your people, that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth." What I like about this verse is that it states, exclusively, that "there is none like me in all the earth". As I reflect upon these verses I come to the conclusion that our God is an awesome God who can never be turned, changed nor obliterated. Our God is the same yesterday, today and forever more.

As I read 2 Corinthians 4:1-12, as it pertains to Lent, I am reminded that in life we will have persecution and we will sacrifice ourselves for the name of Christ, but we are victorious with the Spirit of God in our lives. Verses 8-10 state, "We are troubled on every side; yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." I get excited when I read these verses because it means to me that we bear the burden but we also have the victory. So the question is, why Lent? Why observe Lent? The reason for me would be that we think of the sufferings of Christ; his sacrifice, his blood that he shed on Calvary, the stripes he bore for our sins, the marks, the scars, the beatings, and the ill of religiosity for the benefit of humankind. This is a time when we sacrifice our pleasures specifically remembering Christ's sacrifice for us. Finally, as we meditate on how God delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh, it is the same way God delivers us from sin and its price of death. Sin had to let us go because the blood of Christ set us free. Truly, "there is none like the Lord in all the earth".

CH (CPT) Denise A. Hagler, 18th CSB

8 April 2006
Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 137; Exodus 10:21-11:8; II Corinthians 4:13-18; Mark 10:46-52

DEVOTION

“Therefore we do not give up; even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (II Corinthians 4:16-18)

As the sun descended beyond the monstrous landscape of mountains and trees, I wondered for the thousandth time that day and the millionth time that month, “What in the world could I possibly have been thinking? Who would intentionally do this to themselves?”

The 23rd day of my 30-day Alpine Mountaineering Outward Bound Course was, and still is, undoubtedly the most grueling and trying day of my life so far. After 22 days of navigating our every move, literally living out of the 60-pound packs we carried on our backs, and battling the unpredictable climate of Colorado’s San Juan mountain range, we all thought day 23 would come and go with ease. I’m not sure if it was hour 15, when we discovered we had hiked in the wrong direction for 5 hours, or hour 24, when we calculated that we still had 7 hours of hiking to reach our destination, that we realized how naively wrong we were.

I remember looking around at my seven battered course mates, each probably in the worst physical pain of their lives. A marmot had chewed the shoulder strap of Max’s pack, so the makeshift rope strap had been cutting into his arms for days. John had an unbelievable blister on his foot, and little did I know I had been hiking on a torn MCL for 15 days.

The moon barely lit a path for the last 10 hours of our hike and, as unsafe and crazy as it may sound now, we all decided to close our eyes and walk by the sound of the stream to our left. We kept saying to each other that we were, “just resting our eyes for a few minutes.” It’s a miracle nobody fell in the stream or off the side of the mountain.

Huge chunks of my blind trek are lost to my memories. I thought for a while that I may have actually fallen asleep while walking and my body somehow just kept moving forward.

We made it through that day, and the ones that followed, and as I marveled at the luxuries of chair backs and pretzels during my flight back to North Carolina, I thought about my instructor’s parting comments. He said, “Once you reenter civilization, one single moment from the last 30 days of experiences will probably burn brighter than others.”

My moment came on that 23rd night when I closed my eyes and realized that though my outer person was destroyed my inner person was being renewed. I was not focusing on what was seen, it was only temporary, for the unseen strength that pulled me through that night birthed an unquestionable faith, which now seems to reveal itself in every part of my daily life.

SPC Mary E. Ferguson, 3rd COSCOM

9 April 2006

Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 29; Zechariah 9:9-12; 1 Timothy 6:12-16; Luke 19:36-48

DEVOTION

This is the event Christians celebrate on Palm Sunday. The people lined the road, praising God, waving palm branches, and throwing their cloaks in front of the colt as it passed before them. “Long live the King” was the meaning of their joyful shouts, because they knew Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. “Your King is coming! He is the Righteous One, the Victor! Yet he is lowly, riding on a donkey’s colt!” To announce that he was indeed the Messiah, Jesus chose a time when all Israel would be gathered at Jerusalem, a place where huge crowds could see him, and a way of proclaiming his mission that was unmistakable. The people went wild. Now they were sure their liberation was at hand.

The people who were praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They were sure he would be a national leader who would restore their nation to its former glory, and thus they were deaf to the words of their prophets and blind to Jesus’ real mission. When it became apparent that Jesus was not going to fulfill their hopes, many people turned against him. Luke 19:41-42 says, as he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes.”

How many of us have the wrong idea about Jesus? The result is usually discouragement, disillusionment, and frustration. The people of old were looking for a king. Jesus would have been their King, if only they would have received him on God’s condition. God’s condition was so much better than any of them could ever have imagined. How many of us today want to be in control and tell God what is best for us? I suspect many and maybe most of us. How many of us have become discouraged because we don’t believe God has answered our prayers? Jesus would say to us today, “If only you would know that I have answered your prayers and have provided the greatest gift ever imagined, Eternal Life through me.” I encourage you today to put your trust in the hand of God. Let Him fulfill His dream for your life and be willing to receive Jesus into your life as both your Savior and your Lord.

CH (MAJ) Steve Quigg, 3rd COSCOM

10 April 2006
Monday

READINGS

Psalm 10; Lamentations 1:1-12; II Corinthians 1:1-70; Matthew 21:12-17

DEVOTION

When I was a young boy growing up in the Crenshaw District of Los Angeles, California, my mother's favorite phrase was, "Not in my house." She had a list of house rules that my brother, sister and I had to abide by. In short, she didn't allow us to have company in the house when she was not home, use bad language, watch distasteful videos or movies on TV and keep our rooms or the house dirty. By the time I reached sixteen I no longer wanted to adhere to the "house rules" so I decided to buck the system.

One Saturday afternoon I invited several of my friends over for fun and games. We ate junk food, played cards, watched videos, listened to music and after a few hours managed to turn the house into a pigs pen. Later that day my mother returned home from shopping and went ballistic. She exercised complete authority over our house and immediately sent my friends home! Then without hesitation or mental reservation she sent me to my father's house to live for an entire school semester. My mother refused to tolerate foolish and disrespectful behavior from me or my friends.

Over 2000 years ago Jesus did a little house cleaning. He exercised divine authority over God's house by overturning the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. Jesus said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers" (Matthew 21:12-13). Jesus transformed the marketplace Temple into a healing Temple for people Pharisaic law excluded from Temple worship. God's house was designed to provide free access to God, not to oppress and distract people away from God. Instead of concentrating on making money, those who appear at God's house are to seek glory.

Today the words of my mother and the teachings of Jesus continue to speak to my soul and challenge me to keep my spiritual house in order. This year during Lent I plan to let go of those things in my life that are displeasing in the eye sight of God. This year during Lent my desire is to discipline my mind and body, to study and serve God more intentionally and aggressively.

After all, the last thing I want to hear at this stage in my life is the voice of my mother or God saying, "Not in my house!" I'm convinced that if I stay in the will of God I can and will make a few radical spiritual changes in my life this Lenten season. What about you?

Prayer: Lord, please go in front of me to guide me, stay behind me to catch me and dwell around me to sustain me today, tomorrow and surely forever. Amen.

11 April 2006
Tuesday

READINGS

Psalm 12; Lamentations 1:17-22; II Corinthians 1:8-22; Mark 11:27-33

DEVOTION

“Bright Sadness” (Lamentations 1.17-22)

Traditionally, Lent is a season of sorrowful reflection expressed through fasting. In recognition of the day of resurrection, fasting is broken on Sundays. Lent is a period of mixed emotions; recognition of our sin and sorrow contrasted with the anticipated joyous celebration of Easter. We are forlorn about the suffering of life and sin, yet joyous about our salvation provided through Christ. Because it is a contrast of sentiments, it is known in Eastern Orthodox circles as the season of “bright sadness.” While we recognize the difficulties of life, our hope rests solely in Christ.

Today’s Scripture reflection from Lamentations gives us an example of “bright sadness” (Lam 1.17-22). In 586 B.C., Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar’s army. The city had managed to hold out for a year and a half, but eventually was overcome because of famine. The burning and plundering of Jerusalem brought a deep crisis of faith to God’s people. God had promised to protect them, yet they experienced incredible hardship, suffering, and death.

The book of Lamentations is a prophet’s questioning about the suffering of God’s people. The prophet honestly explored the situation, tackling the tough issues of hurt and disappointment that the people suffered. The prophet repeatedly recognized his own rebellion and sin as well as the sin of the people as a root cause of the tragedy (see verses 18, 20, 22). Although the lamenter did not understand all that had happened and why the destruction was so severe, he remained confident in God’s faithfulness. He believed that someday the day of the Lord would come, when God would establish His peace, justice, and righteousness upon the earth (v 21). The prophet experienced “bright sadness,” or hope within his despair.

Jerusalem can represent our own dreams, our ideals, and our hopes for our lives. Because of our own sinful actions, our Jerusalem may lie in ruins or suffer extreme adversity. Although we should never attribute all of our sufferings to our own sin, we should be honest and humble in recognizing when our own sin has brought destruction to our lives. It is then that we turn our hearts to God and ask for restoration. Are you experiencing difficulty in your life as a result of sin? Perhaps it is financial ruin, career changing events, or broken relationships. As we await God’s renewal in our lives, we live with “bright sadness,” with honest recognition of our need for God’s presence, healing, and love amidst our brokenness. We remain confident in the goodness of God whose mercies are new every morning.

CH (CPT) Loren Hutsell, C 6-32 HET BAT

12 April 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 74; Lamentations 2:1-9; II Corinthians 1:23-2:11; Mark 12:1-11

DEVOTION

A few years ago I was struck by the number of billboards that had gone up around the U.S. with quotes from God on them. Maybe you've seen them, "Those weren't suggestions, they were commandments.", "What part of thou shalt not don't you understand?", etc. Well, one that particularly caught my eye was the one that said, "Don't make me come down there!". That one seemed to relay the message that we receive in the reading in Lamentations for today. It is a listing of all the things that God will do to a people that rejected him and turned away. It will be the "Day of God's anger", He will hurl down the splendor of Israel, He will forget His footstool. Sounds like a very bad day indeed.

The second passage is almost as bad where Paul is addressing the church in Corinth. He is talking to them about a brother whom they have disciplined. Because of this individual Paul says there is sin in the community and all have been grieved. But here the message begins to take on a different flavor. Paul next says the punishment is sufficient and it is time to now offer comfort and forgiveness and to reaffirm love for the errant brother and that Paul forgives who the church has forgiven in the sight of Christ.

In the third reading we hear the parable of the tenants and the vineyard. Of how the master planted a vineyard and then lent it out and when he sent servants to collect the rent they were abused and some killed. Finally, the master sent his son who was likewise killed and thrown out of the vineyard. In response the master had the tenants killed and the vineyard given to others.

In effect, this is what we see happening in our lives. As sinful fallen people we quake as we realize our sinfulness and how God responds to sin. Then we hear the message of the Gospel which assures us of God's love and forgiveness. And finally we take great comfort in the example of the parable where God has outlined His plan for our salvation: that he sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die for the sins of all and to offer forgiveness to those who will accept it.

As we continue in this reflective season of Lent may we be mindful of our sinful condition but also aware of the forgiveness that we have through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

CH (MAJ) Richard Graves, 64th CSG

13 April 2006

Maundy Thursday

READINGS

Psalm 142; Lamentations 2:10-18; I Cor 10:14-17,11:27-32; Mark 14:12-25

DEVOTION

For most American Soldiers, the road to Iraq passes through Camp Buehring or other similar theater staging areas. Units conduct final training tune-ups, acclimation, and preparation. On the final day in such locations, Brigade or Battalion Commanders often gather their Soldiers for last instructions and focus before entering the combat arena.

In the night before his death, Christ gathered his disciples at a “Camp Buehring,” which was the second floor of a house to celebrate a final evening meal together. During that Last Supper, Jesus gave his disciples final instructions before giving them the reins in carrying out his mission in the world. His instructions could be summed up in one verse; they were to love each other as he had loved them (John 15:12). He had loved them with selfless service and unchanging faithfulness. He had loved them by calling them to share in his purpose of proclaiming God’s love to the whole world. He loved them by forgiving their sins. Ultimately, he was about to love them through his death, paying the price of their sin by his suffering and dying on a cross. It was the greatest demonstration of love possible, laying down one’s life for others.

In order to teach his disciples about the meaning of his death, Jesus took some bread and after blessing it he broke it saying “Take it this is my body.” He then took a cup of wine and gave thanks and offered it to them, saying “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.” He gave the Passover meal a new meaning that evening. By his death on the cross, the Lord Jesus would provide a once-for-all sacrifice for sin. His death would satisfy every demand of a holy God, and it would bring salvation to all who would trust in Him. He would exchange His righteousness for our sin and die the death of a criminal. There is no greater love than this.

Maundy Thursday is the remembrance of the last day at “Camp Buehring” for Jesus and his disciples. The word “Maundy” comes from the Latin for ‘command’ (mandatum). It refers to the command given by Jesus at the Last Supper, that his disciples should love one another. We are reminded of Christ’s love for us in the way that his body was broken and His blood was spilled so that our sins would be forgiven and our hearts and minds cleansed. This day we reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made for us and our own commitment to following Christ and his example. Are we living in total self-interest or are we giving of our time, gifts, and influence in loving others?

CH (MAJ) Gary Bragg, 4th SB

14 April 2006

Good Friday

READINGS

Psalm 22; Lamentations 3:1-9,19-33; I Peter 1:10-20; Mark 15:22-39

DEVOTION

“When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land...” Mark 15:33

The 25th of March 2003,...I was in the Iraqi desert just outside An Najaf. My battalion had stopped for a few days, waiting for the roads to clear before we continued north toward Baghdad. A few NCOs and I were standing outside in mid-afternoon, using humvee hoods as tables for our dinner plates. We were tired, and just enjoying a few minutes of quiet as we discussed the day’s activities.

As we talked I looked behind them and across the desert about two miles away, I could see a wall of sand and rain moving swiftly in our direction. It filled the entire horizon. At the top, angry black clouds flashed with lightning. Below the clouds the air boiled red as the sand swirled mercilessly.

We dove for our tents, just as the storm hit. Immediately, everything was pitch black. The high winds whipped the tent flaps. Soon, it started raining, **mud**, as the storm water poured down through the whirling sand. The storm lasted about 30 minutes, then moved on leaving a dark red sky in its wake. An Iraqi “shamal” is terrifying, and we had just experienced one first hand.

As I reflect back on that day, the way a normal, bright afternoon so quickly converted to darkness and raging winds, it occurs to me the afternoon of Jesus’ crucifixion must have been like this. As our Lord hung on the cross and cried out his last words, the sun was blotted out, and the curtain in the temple was torn. I can see it. I can feel the terror of the disciples, the frantic questions: “Is the world ending?” “Is God so angry with us that he has decided to blot us off the face of the earth?”

This is “**Good** Friday” precisely because it was not in God’s plan to blot us off the face of the earth. It is the day our new lives began. Don’t be tempted to look ahead to Easter, and say “It’s okay, I know that on the third day Christ arose.” That is a cop-out! The pain and anguish of our Lord, the fear and grief of the disciples... you and I must feel this with them to fully appreciate the meaning of this weekend. It wasn’t Christ’s resurrection that saved us, it was his **death**. God sent his Son to live with us, walk the earth with us, hurt with us, and DIE a truly horrible death for us. It was a dark day. It was a terrifying day. And a truly **good** one for you and for me.

CH (LTC) Barbara Sherer, 3rd COSCOM

15 April 2006

Saturday

READINGS

Psalm 27; Lamentations 3:37-58; Romans 8:1-11

DEVOTION

As we finish our journey through Lent these past many weeks – we find ourselves at the darkest day of the calendar. It marks the “in-between” time. It’s the time between the death of our Savior and the hope of His resurrection. This day represents the “dark time,” when all we have is faith and a thin promise to keep us going. I imagine most of us have been “there” before.

Can we place ourselves in the shoes of the disciples... They had left everything to follow who they believed in their hearts to be God’s own Son. They watched as their own religious elders assisted in his capture by the Roman authorities, while Jesus almost willingly suffered the most humiliating and painful death of the day. Was their trust misplaced? Why did the God-Man take no action and demonstrate his sovereignty over evil? Was he powerless then, and do we sometimes find ourselves wondering if he is powerless to save us as well? When we faithful disciples find ourselves asking that question – we are in the “in-between” time. The lesson for me is so poetically resolved in the first half of Lamentations 3.

“He has filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall. He has broken my teeth with gravel; He has trampled me in the dust. I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is... **Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:** Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. **I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’**” Lam 3: 16,17, 21-24.

Here we find the prophet reminding us in those dark hours, to take heart, to remember back on the goodness and faithfulness of our Lord – and to have hope. Easter is coming; so I remind myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”

So on the day of our Lord’s descent to hell on our behalf, I can wait; I will wait, with hope that when I light the candle tonight at midnight – that I will start to see the light and love and hope of my caring Savior start to pierce my inner darkness. I will remember, again, the sweet comfort of a God who is willing to go to any lengths to bring me home to Him.

COL Susan Sowers, Chief of Staff, 3rd COSCOM

16 April 2006
Easter Sunday

READINGS

Psalm 150; Isaiah 61; I Corinthians 15:15-58; John 20:1-18

DEVOTION

They put him to death, hanging him on an old rugged cross, but God raised Him to life on the third day. He was clearly seen by many witnesses throughout the world. The Resurrected Jesus stood before his fellow disciples and said to them “Peace be with you.”

After the death of Jesus, the disciples were alone and afraid. They had followed Jesus for almost three years and now their savior was dead. Afraid and alone, their question was what will happen to us? They feared for their own lives.

This would be the normal reaction of anyone who has lost his or her leader. Jesus, knowing that their hearts were afraid, went to them and spoke words of assurance. He said to them, “Peace be with you”. They were so amazed that their fears disappeared and they felt a renewed sense of commitment to him and their purpose.

What’s a timely phrase for us today? We have been in this country of Iraq for almost six months today we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior and I can hear his words to us “Peace be with you”. Thank God for today. Let us celebrate the victory over death...

CH (COL) Larry D. Robinson, 3rd COSCOM Command Chaplain

A large yellow cross graphic is centered on the page, with its arms extending towards the top, bottom, left, and right edges.

Daily Devotions for the Season of Lent

from the Heart, Mind and Spirit of the 3rd COSCOM Soldier

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